

AFFIDAVIT OF TAMMY NASH

I, Tammy Nash, being of lawful age and being duly sworn upon my oath, state as follows:

1. My name is Tammy Nash (formerly Belfield). I live in Branson, Missouri. I recently retired from law enforcement.
2. In December of 1998, I was working as a Washington County Deputy under Sheriff Ronnie Skiles. I had several duties while employed in this role: jail administrator, evidence officer, evidence clerk, and patrol officer. I wore a lot of hats; it was common at the time for Washington County deputies to fulfill multiple roles because we were a small department with limited resources.
3. I was involved in the investigation of Rita Politte's murder. My primary responsibility for the investigation was to collect evidence from the crime scene. Jim Belfield, my husband at the time, who is now deceased, was also a deputy then, and involved in the Politte investigation.
4. I knew Michael Politte, who I knew as "Bernie," before this crime because he used to play baseball with my son.
5. This case really stuck with me because we were a small department and this type of case was unusual, and also because there was another tragic crime the very same day (a homicide of a four year old girl) so myself and other cops were going back and forth between the two crime scenes all day. It was a day I will always remember, but wish I could forget.
6. This case also stuck with me because it has always troubled me. I have always had doubts that Michael is guilty.

7. There was a split among the investigation team about whether Michael was the one who did it. My husband Jim and at least one other member of the law enforcement team thought he may be innocent.
8. But other officers focused on Michael right away and assumed he was guilty because they just did not think he was telling the truth and they thought he was acting odd. I disagreed; Michael was a fourteen year old kid who had just found his mom dead. I wondered how did they expect him to act after this trauma. Personally, I know that we all respond differently to situations, especially 14 year old kids.
9. As I recall, Curt Davis was one of the main officers with this mindset. He said something like Bernie was laughing, but I thought so what? I questioned what was he laughing at? Was he laughing to keep from crying? As a 14 year old kid, who just lost his mother, how was he supposed to respond as the cops were throwing questions at him? What are you going to say? Curt Davis's mindset towards Michael is something that never sat right with me.
10. When I saw Michael at the crime scene, he was in the back of a police car, with his hands pressed against the window, looking out. I did not see anything in his behavior that morning that I found suspicious.
11. Michael supposedly did not pass the lie detection voice stress test. But I do not know how even I would have done on one of those in the circumstances he was in, with that trauma, and I am a grown woman, not a 14 year old kid. In my opinion, police rely too heavily on these lie detection tests. I do not have much faith in them.
12. I never thought there was enough evidence to convict Michael.
13. I believed Ed Politte was a more likely suspect. He was an odd person and I thought he acted suspiciously during my interactions with him after the crime.

14. When I was working as a jail administrator, I was present sometimes when Ed would visit Michael in custody, after Michael was arrested. I saw them fight.
15. I overheard Michael tell his dad that his dad was letting him take the fall for his mom's murder. This was in the context of Michael asking his dad for money to hire a lawyer, but his dad said he did not have the money. Oddly, however, Ed then talked to Michael about buying him a new conversion van. Michael got upset and asked how Ed had money for a van, but not for an attorney for Michael. That's when Michael got upset and said something like his dad was going to let him take the fall for this. I interpreted this to mean that Michael believed Ed committed this crime. I thought this was important so I wrote a report and sent it to both the prosecutor and Michael's public defender.
16. Ed was pushed out of the suspect pool pretty quickly by the cops. Everyone kept focusing on Michael.
17. The Fire Marshall's Office seemed to be a driving force keeping the focus on Michael. They kept talking about him being a "fire bug," and were convinced he was guilty because of the gasoline found on his shoes.
18. Other suspicious things happened over the course of this investigation. For example, a Polite family member came into the Sheriff's Department, claiming to have found some kind of bloody tool in Michael's closet, saying something like "this has blood all over it and you missed it." The Sheriff had already released the crime scene, but we took it back so we could do another search of Michael's bedroom and retrieve the tool this family member described. It was large and had rust on it.
19. I told the family member I did not miss this tool during my initial search, and this looked like rust not blood. I submitted the tool to the lab for testing. It turned out to be rust. But someone had to have placed this tool in Michael's closet after the crime and our

- investigation of the scene, because I am certain that I did not miss it when I initially processed the scene. I searched Michael's room and closet numerous times, and I had other officers with me for the search. This tool brought in by the family member was big and would have been obvious. I know it was not there the morning of the crime.
20. According to the autopsy, Rita was hit with a blunt object. During my search of the scene, including Michael's room, on the morning of the crime, I never found a possible murder weapon. As far as I know, a murder weapon was never found.
21. We were a small department and did not have a lot of man power. We did not have the resources or tools that we needed. That was part of why we had to call the Fire Marshall in, and we called the FBI in for help. We did not have a lot of funding.
22. Also, there were a lot of officers on this case, and the communication between deputies was poor. We did not work very well together because each of us more-or-less followed our own investigative strategy.
23. Sheriff Skiles put the lead property investigator, Curt Davis, in charge of the investigation of Rita's murder instead of my husband, Jim. Skiles was not too fond of Jim. (Jim was a straight shooter who told everyone exactly what he thought.) Jim was could have out-investigated/run circles around Davis any day, as Jim was better trained.
24. When Michael was taken into custody at the jail and I was working as jail administrator, I refused to let the Sheriff place him in the cell with the adult men. Michael was only fifteen and small; he still seemed like a child. Ultimately, we placed him alone in an office that had been converted to a cell. Because this was right next to my office, I ended up seeing a lot of Michael.
25. During this time, I remember Michael crying a lot. Michael said things like "if my mama was here, she would tell them I would never hurt her and I did not do this."

26. As I got to know Michael better, my doubts that he was the one who did this crime increased. He seemed immature for his age and I do not want to say he was not smart, but he at least was not savvy enough to pull this off. I do not think he was capable of masterminding this crime.

27. I left the Washington County department by the time Michael went to trial. I still testified at trial but I was not up there long, was not asked many questions; they did not want to hear what I had to say.

28. I am submitting this affidavit now because I think Michael is innocent.

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT

8-22-21
Date

Tammy Nash
Tammy Nash

Subscribed and sworn before me, a notary public, in and for the State of Missouri this

22 day of August, 2021.



Name: Winifred D. Adams
Notary Public

My commission expires: 5/6/23

